

An Overview of Poetry: Its Structure, Technical, and Stylistic features, July 2006
by Editorial Department, Africana Homestead Legacy Publishers, Cherry Hill, NJ USA
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Poets choose various forms to express themselves in verse, including traditional, modern, or post-modern forms. A poet may use one or more of these elements in their work:

- the line, the stanza, or the verse paragraph and combinations of lines, stanzas, or verse paragraphs
 - the stanza has a fixed number of lines, regular rhymes and rhythms, and other poetic elements (see all that follows).
 - verse paragraphs do not have a standard number of lines and usually do not use regular rhymes or rhythms, but have a poetic tone from unique rhythms and other poetic elements.
- broader visual presentation of words and calligraphy
 - poets craft poetry to look a certain way on a page
 - especially in modern poetry, there is special placement of individual lines or groups of lines on the page
- shorter poetry, as an individual poem of a few stanzas, or larger structures, called poetic forms, such as the sonnet.

Poetry is an art form that uses language in special ways:

- language is used for its aesthetic (artistic) qualities
- language is used for its usual meaning or instead of its usual meaning.
- the study of the nature, structure, and variation of language is called linguistics
- poetic diction is the linguistic style, vocabulary, and simile or metaphors that poets use when writing poetry. The meaning of words intersects with the sound of the words and the form of the words. Modern poetry may use fewer traditional stylistic features, alter the styles, or create new styles. *A person's culture will affect the type of poetry they create.*

Poets may use several *structural*, *technical*, or *stylistic* features in their work:

- condensed forms and conventions
 - to reinforce the meaning of the poem's words
 - to expand the meaning of the poems' words
 - to raise a reader's emotions (happy, sad, angry, wistful, etc.)
 - to affect the reader's senses (sight, smell, touch, taste, hearing)
- technical writing devices
 - *rhyme*, the repetition of identical or similar sounds in two or more different words, usually at the end of lines of verse.

Many poets write two rhyming lines, called a couplet (or distich).

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Example:

Life cuts like a knife,
When man flies to strife.

Quatrains are also common, the four line stanzas that have two-rhyming couplets.

Variation 1: lines 1 and 2 rhyme and lines 3 and line 4 rhyme.

Life cuts like a knife,
when man flies to strife,
Let there be no more war,
but lasting peace evermore.

Variation 2: lines 1 and 3 rhyme and lines 2 and 4 rhyme.

O little man with your glistening net
how did you fare today?
Have twilights' rays begun to set
upon the waterway?

More on rhyming conventions:

- three lines is a triplet or tercet, and five lines is a quintain (or cinquain), six lines is a sestet and eight lines is an octet..
- some poetry has consistent, well-defined rhyming schemes.
- some poetry has variable rhyming schemes
- modern poets often avoid traditional rhyming schemes
- *assonance*, the repetition of vowel sounds within a short passage

Example, the *ī* sound is used in six words in this verse:

Life cuts like a knife by strife that flies man to war.

- *alliteration*, starting successive word or stressed syllables in a word with the same consonant

Example: the *l* is used in four words and the *m* in two words in this verse

Life like a lazy long river,
meanders mischievously
left and right.

- *rhythm*, the musical or chanting (incantatory) effects of a poem, the actual sound of a line of poetry
 - results from varying accented sounds of syllables or words
 - uses a specific time frame

A hymn or a psalm is a good example of the effective use of rhythm in verse.

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- *meter*, the linguistic sound *patterns* in verses that are divided into a variety of units. In English the units may be stressed and unstressed syllables, depending on the type of poetry.

Meter is more structured in traditional forms of poetry compared to modern or post-modern poetry that is free form.

An article at Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, gives an overview of the various types of meter that poets use.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meter_%28poetry%29

- stylistic elements that lead to multiple interpretations of a poem
 - *ambiguity*, words with an unclear meaning or that can be interpreted more than one way. Example: “blue” refers to the color or to sadness.
 - *symbolism*, is using arbitrary symbols as simplified representations of concepts or objects and showing relationships between concepts and objects. In a simple way, "symbolism" is using any icon or representation which carries a specific conventional meaning to give context to a work.
Example: religious symbols (cross, rock, water, lamb) may be used to represent concepts or objects (Christianity, faith, salvation, messiah, etc.)
 - *irony*, a figure of speech (verbal irony) with a gap or variance between what someone writes or says, and what is understood. It is also considered a twist of fate where a later action relates back to an earlier statement.
 - we suggest further research for other options.

These are poetry genres (types) created throughout the years and around the globe:

- Aubade
- Clerihew
- Epic
- Haiku
- Lied
- Lyric
- Ode
- Rhapsody
- Song
- Sonnet
- Speculative poetry

Primary sources for this article: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poetry> and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Literary_genre visit these sites for more information.

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